

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 2.

Please amend claim 1 to read as follows:

1. (Amended) Method of bonding metal shells to form a vessel having an interior void, the method comprising:

forming each of the metal shells with a peripheral flange;

aligning the metal shells with one another such that their respective peripheral flanges are engaged with one another;

assembling the aligned metal shells with tooling to engage the flanges; and

applying compression force to the flanges, via the tooling, at an elevated temperature so as to form a diffusion bond joint where the flanges meet;

wherein the region where the flanges engage one another defines a bond region, and wherein the compression force is applied broadly across the flanges so as to cover at least the bond region.